FIRST REPORT

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE (1985-86)

(EIGHTH LOK SABHA)

MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS— TRANSPORTATION OF PERISHABLE COMMODITIES BY RAILWAYS

Action Taken by Government on the Recommendations contained in the 57th Report of Estimates Committee (7th Lok Sabha) on the Ministry of Railways--Transportation of Perishable Commodities by Railways.

Presented to Lok Sabha on 13 August, 1985

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

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INTRODUCTION

I, the Chairman of the Estimates Committee having been authorised by the Committee to submit the Report on their behalf present this First Report on action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the Fifty-seventh Report of Estimates Committee (7th Lok Sabha) on the Ministry of Railways—Transportation of Perishable Commodities by Railways.

2. The 57th Report was presented to Lok Sabha on 21st December, 1983. Government furnished their replies indicating action taken on the recommendations contained in that Report by 20th July, 1984. The replies were examined by Study Group on Action Taken Reports of Estimates Committee at their sitting held on 17th July, 1985. The draft Report was adopted by the Committee on 22nd July, 1985.

3. The Report has been divided into the following Chapters:—

I. Report.

II. Recommendations Observations which have been accepted by Government.

III. Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's replies.

VI. Recommendations Observations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted by the Committee.

V. Recommendations Observations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited.

4. An analysis of action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in the 57th Report of Estimates Committee is given in Appendix. It would be observed therefrom that out of 18 recommendations made in the Report 10 recommendations *i.e.* 55.5 per cent have been accepted by the Government and the Committee do not desire to pursue 2 recommendations *i.e.* 11 per cent in view of Government's replies. Replies of Government in respect of 5 recommendations *i.e.* 28 per cent have not been accepted by the Committee. Final replies in respect of 1 recommendation *i.e.* 5.5 per cent is still awaited.

NEW DELHI;
29 *July*, 1985
Sravana 7, 1907 (*S*)

CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI,
Chairman,
Estimates Committee.

CHAPTER I

REPORT

1.1 This Report of the Estimates Committee deals with action taken by Government on the recommendations contained in their 57th Report (7th Lok Sabha) on the Ministry of Railways—Transportation of Perishable Commodities by Railways which was presented to Lok Sabha on 21st December, 1983.

1.2 Action taken notes have been received in respect of all the 18 recommendations contained in the Report.

1.3 Action taken notes on the recommendations of the Committee have been categorised as follows:—

(i) Recommendations|Observations which have been accepted by the Government:
Sl. Nos. 1; 3; 6; 7; 9; 11; 14; 16; 17; 18.
(Total 10-Ch. II)

(ii) Recommendations|Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government replies:
Sl. Nos. 4, 13. (Total 2-Ch. III)

(iii) Recommendations|Observations in respect of which Government's replies have not been accepted by the Committee:
Sl. Nos. 2, 5, 8, 10, 15. (Total 5-Ch. IV)

(iv) Recommendations|Observations in respect of which final replies are still awaited:
Sl. No. 12. (Total 1-Ch. V)

1.4 The Committee will now deal with action taken by Government on some of the recommendations.

Institutional Arrangements for Transportation of Perishable Commodities

Recommendation (Sl. No. 2, Para No. 1.14)

1.5 The Committee had emphasised that the deficiencies in regard to collection of statistics of production and demand regionwise and

arrangements for transport of perishable commodities should be improved by making such institutional arrangements as may be needed and evolving a perspective plan for putting it through without delay.

1.6 In their reply the Ministry of Railways have stated that the Ministry of Agriculture who collect such statistics have stated that they are at present estimating the likely crop prospects for only 3 or 4 perishable commodities. They intend to take up such studies for more commodities by the middle of Seventh Five Year Plan period. Ministry of Agriculture has agreed to collect information on the marketable surplus in respect of major perishable commodities and the likely consumption areas to which they are to be dispersed.

1.7 The Ministry of Railways have, in their reply to an earlier recommendation (contained in Paragraph 1.13 Serial No. 1), intimated to the Committee that the "Zonal Railways have been advised to evolve a perspective plan for movement of Perishable commodities in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, State Governments, the Trade etc." The Committee feel that the preparation of the perspective plan for movement of perishable commodities should not depend entirely on the statistical data proposed to be collected by the Ministry of Agriculture by the middle of Seventh Five Year Plan period. The Committee, therefore, recommend that the Ministry of Railways should independently apply themselves to the task of preparation of the perspective plan for movement of perishable commodities which may provide for adequate, speedy and safe rail movement of such commodities at the earliest.

Earmarking of space for Perishable Commodities in fast trains

Recommendation (S. No. 5, Para No. 2.25)

1.8 The Committee found that though on paper highest priority was assigned for movement of perishable commodities, they learnt that irrespective of the demand their carriage by Mail/Express trains was restricted "to the extent room is available." This obviously created uncertainties and difficulties to the industry and trade as urged before the Committee by their representatives. The Committee felt that, while in the long run adequate facilities should be available for fast movement of perishable commodities, at least over long distance, some short term measures to remove uncertainties were necessary. They therefore, recommended the earmarking of some space in fast trains dependipg upon the demand, which should be made known to the prospective consigners and that necessary instructions in this regard should be issued to the Zonal Railways.

1.9 The Ministry in their reply stated that instructions had been reiterated to the Railways that the allocation of available room in Mail/Express Trains for various stations/commodities should be made and publicised to the trade. Certain arrangements made for the clearance of certain major commodities during the peak season will also be published to the trade and the concerned agencies.

1.10 The reply of the Ministry inter-alia **only reports reiteration of instruction to the different Railways for "allocation of available room in Mail/Express Trains for various stations/commodities etc." The Ministry have, however, not taken note of the Committee's recommendation about earmarking of space for transportation of perishable commodities in fast trains and making known this fact to the prospective consigners. The absence of any specific earmarking not only leads to uncertainty in the minds of prospective consigners but also could provide scope for manipulations by the concerned staff and unscrupulous consigners trying to take advantage through unfair means to get their consignments booked. The Committee therefore, reiterate their earlier recommendation and would like to be informed of the action taken by the Ministry in this regard within three months.**

Representation of the Growers in the Railways Users' Consultative Committees.

Recommendation (S. No. 8, Para No. 3.29)

1.11 The Committee had desired that adequate representation should invariably be given to the representatives of growers and traders dealing with perishable commodities on the Station|Divisional| Zonal Railway Users' Consultative Committees.

1.12 The Ministry while noting the Committee's recommendation, stated in their reply that representation on the rail users' consultative Committees at all levels was given to different groups of rail users including the State Governments and Agricultural Associations as well as the State Legislatures and the Parliament. According to the Ministry, "as wide respresentation as is possible is given to the travelling public, trade, industry and agricultural interests, interests of growers and traders dealing with perishable commodities will also be ensured as necessary."

1.13 The reply of the Government does not clearly specify whether the suggestion of the Committee has been accepted or not. The Committee expect that, as recommended by them earlier, growers of, and traders in perishable commodities will be given due representation in consultative forum of the Railways at all levels.

Changes in Design of rolling Stock and improvement in-transit conditions

Recommendation (S. No. 10, Para 4.23)

1.14 The Committee drew the attention of the Ministry of Railways to their reply to Committee's recommendation in para 2.105 of their 10th Report (1980-81) on the Ministry of Railways—Transportaion of Essential Commodities, wherein the Ministry had *inter-alia* stated that Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) wer engaged in studying the 'wagon climate' in transit of fruits and vegetables like apples, mangoes, oranges, bananas, potatoes and onions etc. The Indian Railways were also associated with this project and they extended cooperation for the experiments being conducted by the Marketing Planning and Design Centre (MPDC) under the Ministry of Rural Development. The Ministry had further stated that the MPDC were expected to make their recommendations based on experiments with regard to changes in design of rolling stock and to improve in-transit conditions. During evidence the Committee sought to know the latest position of the project as also the recommendations, if any, made by the MPDC. The representative of the Ministry informed the Committee that 'no specific recommendation was there'. The Committee desired that this project should be completed early and on the basis of the findings in regard to causes of in-transit deterioration improved in-transit environment provided.

1.15 The Ministry in their reply stated that their observations had been noted, and all feasible help was being renderd to the Market and Design Centre, to carry out their experiments for improvement of in-transit conditions of selected perishable commodities.

1.16 The reply of the Ministry of Railways does not fully meet the recommendations of this Committee. The Ministry should have impressed upon the Ministry of Rural Development the importance of early finalisation of their report by the Market Planning and Design Centre (MPDC) as recommended by the Committee, so that the Railways are in a position to improve in-transit environment for the transportation of perishable commodities. This should be done now and the Committee informed of the results thereof expeditiously.

Introduction of container system

Recommendation (S. No. 15, Para 5.9A)

1.17 The Committee had commended the introduction of container system for transportation of perishable commodities transported

in bulk in a phased manner so that pilferage specially at loading, unloading and transhipment points was prevented and handling of goods was easier.

1.18 The Ministry in their reply pointed out that domestic containers were not suitable for the transportation of perishable commodities in bulk and no such plans had been considered by the Railways so far.

1.19 The Committee had desired the Ministry of Railways to introduce, in a phased manner, container system for transportation of perishable commodities in bulk so that pilferage is prevented and handling of goods is made easier. The Committee are surprised at the manner in which the Ministry have brushed aside their recommendation by simply stating that "domestic containers are not suitable for the transportation of perishable commodities in bulk and no such plans have been considered by the Railways so far". The Committee expect of the Ministry of Railways a greater seriousness in considering the recommendations made in their reports. They would like the Ministry to reconsider this recommendation. In case the existing containers are defective and unsuitable for the transportation of perishable commodities in bulk, the defects should be removed through research and design modifications. If necessary even new containers could be designed and manufactured for the purpose.

Implementation of Recommendations

1.20 The Committee would like to emphasise that they attach the greatest importance to the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Government. They would, therefore, urge that Government should make expeditious implementation of the recommendations accepted by Government. In case where it is not possible to implement the recommendations in letter and spirit for any reason, the matter should be reported to the Committee in time with reasons for non-implementation.

1.21 The Committee also desire that final replies in respect of the recommendations contained in Chapter V of this Report may be furnished to the Committee expeditiously.

CHAPTER II

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ACCEPTED BY GOVERNMENT

Recommendation (Sl. No. 1, Para 1.13)

1.13 It is essential to ensure adequate arrangement for speedy and safe movement of horticultural and other perishable commodities in the interest of both producers and consumers. The Committee's examination of arrangement made by Railways regrettably revealed several deficiencies that persisted all along. The coordination between the concerned Ministries *viz.*, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Railways, which is the primary requirement is by and large non-existent. Neither of these Ministries has precise and uptodate information as to production and demand for these commodities in the various regions to plan and provide for transport by rail. In fact, the railways are unaware of the traffic demand and even the Ministry of Agriculture has not been maintaining statistics in regard to horticultural crops except a few. It was only recently that a group on transportation of perishable agricultural commodities was set up by the Ministry of Agriculture associating the railways. The report of the group submitted in 1981 is still under consideration for evolving a perspective plan by the railways and setting up a National Horticultural Board as an apex body by the Ministry of Agriculture in order to make proper transportation arrangements for horticultural products. The Committee would like to know why no institutional arrangement has been thought of and proper planning done to ensure adequate, speedy and safe rail movement of perishable commodities so far.

Reply of Government

Hitherto, Railways have been arranging clearance of perishable traffic by the luggage vans and parcel vans by normal train services and also by attaching extra wagons and running special trains. Advance Planning is done based on the past trends, the crop prospects, and the surplus produce likely to be transported for different directions in consultation with the merchants and the trade. For movement of major perishable commodities like apples, bananas, oranges,

mangoes etc., the railways consult the trade and merchants much in advance of the commencement of the season. As suggested by the Committee, the zonal railways have been advised to evolve a perspective plan for movement of perishable commodities in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, State Governments, the trade etc. At the Ministry's level, a Committee has been set up to review the problems related to movement of perishable commodities.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 3, Para No. 2.23)

Perishable commodities are carried by rail at a concessional rate of tariff. However, admittedly the rate is in some cases higher than that charged for road movement. Further, though the Railways claim to substantially subsidise the rail movement of perishable commodities, the Committee have been informed by a non-official organisation that with the surcharge levied the cost of rail transport exceeds the value of the goods. The Committee desire that the tariff rates and the rates of surcharge should be reviewed commodity-wise and readjusted with a view to ensuring that the transport cost remains reasonable having regard to the value of the goods and does not unduly depress the demand or make it very dear to consumers. After all the rail tariff should be determined on the basis of what the traffic can bear. The Committee would like to know the result of the review.

Reply of Government

Based on the recommendations of Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee, the parcel rates have been rationalised. The parcels traffic is charged at the following scales of rates:—

	Index
General Parcels Scale (GP-A) Rate.	100
General Parcels Scale (GP-B) Rate.	90
Concessional Parcels Scale (CP-1) Rate.	80
Concessional Parcels Scale (CP-2) Rate.	50
Concessional Parcels Scale (CP-3) Rate.	40

It is relevant to mention here that while making their recommendation, the Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee observed as under:—

> "The rate structure we envisage would cover the costs fully at every stage except perhaps at far away distances where there is hardly any traffic. However, every variety of parcels, vegetable and milk, for instance, which have low

unit value and are daily necessities of the common man cannot bear its full cost while some valuable goods-cinema films to take an example-can bear more than their proportionate share of costs. It is, therefore, necessary to so distribute the burden of the additional revenue required as to make it consonant with the capacity of different goods and articles to bear the increase. The policy aim, therefore, must be to charge for each variety of traffic what it can bear, while ensuring that the revenues from "other coaching" traffic taker as whole cover full costs."

Daily necessities such as vegetables and milk, newspapers and magazines greatly affect the life of the people. Of these, newspapers and magazines are charged at the lowest (special) Scale and vegetables and milk at the next higher, CP-3 Scale, Bread, eggs, fish, poultry and meat as also fruit, which have higher income elasticity and are normally consumed by the relatively better-off people, are charged at the next higher Scale CP-2; books and khadder are also charged at this rate. Betel leaves, butter and cream are charged at the next higher Scale CP-1; handloom products are also charged at this scale. All goods and articles not otherwise mentioned (machinary parts, medicine, cinema films, textiles, leather goods, aluminium wares, cigarettes, radios, etc.) are charged at the next higher CPA Scale which is the basic Scale. Passenger luggage is charged at the L Scale.

As for the levy of surcharge on parcels traffic for carriage by superfast trains and Rajdhani Express trains, the Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee have observed that perishable traffic for distances upto 500 kms. should normally be carried by only Ordinary trains. If any consignor wishes to have his goods sent by a fast train, it should be done only on levy of a surcharge. The additional surcharge recommended by the Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee was as indicated below:—

(i) No perishable traffic should be carried by Mail|Express trains (excluding a few unimportant specified trains) except on payment of a surcharge (20 per cent upto 500 Kms. and 10 per cent for distance beyond).

(ii) There will be no extra charge for non-perishable traffic carried by Mail/Express trains except when a consignor for carriage by Mail|Express trains.

(iii) All traffic-perishable or non-perishable-carried in superfast trains|Rajdhani Express will be charged a surcharge at 2½/5 times the appropriate rate of surcharge applicable wishes to have a guarantee of transit time.

The above recommendations of the Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee were accepted by the Government and implemented with effect from 1.10,81. However, the matter has since been reviewed and the revised supplementary charge leviable on the parcels traffic moving by Mail|Express trains, Superfast and Rajdhani Express trains is indicated below:

(i) Perishable traffic carried by Mail/Express trains.	20%
(ii) All parcels traffic carried by Superfast and Rajdhani Express trains : —	
(a) General Parcel Scale (GP-A) Rate	5%
(b) General Parcel Scale (GP-B) Rate	10%
(c) Concessional Parcel Scale (CP-1) Rate	20%
(d) Concessional Parcel Scale (CP-2) Rate	30%
(e) Concessional Parcel Scale (CP-3) Rate	30%

The general approach of the Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee was that, while covering the cost of services, the earnings from the other Coaching traffic carried in brake vans & other vehicles should be the same as from the Second Class Sleeper Coach in Mail|Express trains.

Indian Railways have now adopted a parcel freight structure based on sound rating principles, taking all the relevant factors, including cost and value of service into consideration.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 3, Para No. 2.24)

Incidentally, it has been represented to the Committee that the slab system at present adopted for charging freight for movement of perishable commodities operates harshly. The Committee recommend that this aspect also should be examined as part of the review suggested in the foregoing paragraph.

Reply of Government

The distance slabs for charging of freight for movement of parcels traffic is generally based on the recommendations of the Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee. In a distance based system, the rates do no change with each additional kilometre. Instead a distance-block

system is used, with blocks varying in length. The blocks of distance obtaining prior to 1st April, 1982 and w.e.f. 1-4-1982 are shown below:

Prior to 1-4-1982		from 1-4-1982	
Zone	Distance Blocks for which same rate is charged	Zone	Distance Blocks for which same rate is charged
Kms	Kms	Kms	Kms
Upto 40	40	Upto 50	50
41 to 250	5	51 to 800	10
251 to 800	10	801 to 2000	25
801 to 2000	25	2001 Kms onwards	50
2001 kms onwards	50		

It would be observed that there is not much difference in the distance blocks adopted w.e.f. 1-4-1982 and those obtaining prior to this date excepting that the blocks of 5 Kms have been dispensed with mainly with a view to simplify the rating procedure. This, however, does not operate harshly in respect of the perishable commodities. It has been observed that the average lead in the case of perishable commodities like vegetables is 549 Kms, milk 406 Kms, fresh fruits 752 Kms and eggs 837 kms. For such commodities, earlier distance blocks of 10 Kms even now generally apply.

In this connection, it may be mentioned that as already replied to under Recommendation No. 2.23, parcels rate structure has been evloved keeping in view that every variety of parcels cannot bear its full cost and that it has become necessary to so distribute the burden of the additional revenue required as to make it consonant with the capacity of different goods and articles to bear the increase. It is in view of this objective that daily necessities such as vegetables, milk etc are being charged at lower scale of rates.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84.]

Recommendation (S. No. 6, Para No. 3.26)

Though the Railways have claimed to have met the requirement of goods traffic of perishable commodities except in few areas, there is a widespread feeling of general inadequacy. In fact

the traffic has declined substantially on Northern, Northeast Frontier and Southern Zones over the period 1979-80 to 1981-82 clearly indicating that the traffic shies away from rail on account of uncertainty and inadequacy of timely wagon availability. There is no scietific method of assessing the wagon requirement in advance and plan the movement of perishable goods traffic smoothly nor has there been any reliable market survey. Even in the case of small consignments which are accepted on first come first served basis, the position seems to be equally unsatisfactory. Besides delay in transit there is considerable delay at loading and unloading points on account of various inadequacies in the system and bunching of traffic in the absence of proper movement plan. The Ministry of Railways had to admit this before the Committee in evidence. The Committee cannot but deprecate the adhocism that prevailed all along and the neglect that the movement of perishable commodities suffered thereby. Even if it was not possible to provide adequate facilities, the least that was expected was to ensure the best use of available facilities by removing uncertainties through proper planning and active coordination with the agencies and interest concerned.

Reply of Government

Ministry of Agriculture has agreed to nominate concerned officers of the Agricultural Marketing Advisers Organisation to liaise with the zonal railways, to assist in planning the movement of the perishable commodities. In addition, the Directors of Horticulture/Agriculture from the Deptt. of Agriculture of State Govt. will also be co-opted in meetings with the trade for working out the requirements of rail transport before the commencement of the season. Railways have also been advised to inform the trade about the allocation of available room in the Mail/Express trains at various stations for various commodities and the special arrangements made during the season.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84.]

Recomendation (Sl. No. 7, Para Nos. 3.27 and 3.28)

The Committee have been informed that a special cell is now being created to assess the requirements from field in concert with the Ministry of Agriculture, State Governments and other agencies. The Committee wonder why such a step had not been thought of so far. They would urge that this should be implemented forthwith. They wish to add that the perspective plan for movement of perishable commodities referred to earlier in this Report

should be drawn up on the basis of a reliable market survey which should enable projection of the demand for the future fairly accurately.

The Committee are of the view that ideally Railways as national carriers ought to be in a position to accept all the goods tendered for movement either by goods or by passenger trains. The consignors should not be compelled to move them by road at higher cost to themselves which also will not be in the interest of the economy. The perspective plan should, therefore, be drawn up having regard to this basic principle.

Reply of Government

Instructions have been issued to the Zonal Railways to contact the State Governments and other agencies to assess the demand for clearance of perishable traffic and to draw up a plan on the basis of information furnished by the state agencies.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84.]

Recommendation (S. No. 9, Para No. 3.30)

The Committee are concerned to learn that more than 30 per cent of cases of perishable commodities booked by rail are affected by theft, pilferage and damage. This is incredibly high. Further, lately 12 per cent of the total compensation claims paid by the Railways was in relation to these commodities. Going by the portion of the perishable commodities to the total goods/parcel traffic in value terms, the compensation claims paid for these commodities is also very high. The position that has thus emerged shows that the perishable commodities are particularly badly handled by the Railways. The Committee expect the Ministry of Railways to take all possible steps to obviate theft, pilferage and damage and monitor the position effectively to progressively bring them down.

Reply of Government

During 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83 and 1983-84 (upto Sept. 83), the total amount paid towards compensation was Rs. 1,404.06 lakhs, Rs. 1,989.65 lakhs, Rs.. 2,192.63 lakhs and Rs. 1,367.54 lakhs respectively. Out of these, the amount of claim paid for fruits, vegetables and other perishables was Rs. 143.74 lakhs, Rs. 237.61 lakhs, Rs. 237.29 lakhs and Rs. 145.41 lakhs respectively which is 10.24, 11.94, 10.8 and 10.6 per cent of the total amount paid for compensation respectively for these years.

The matter regarding pilferage theft or damage to the perishables consignments was also considered by the 'One Man Expert Committee' on compensation claims in detail and they made certain observations and specific recommendations to guard against the same. Some of the important Recommendations made are:—

(a) Every effort should be made by Railways to persuade trade to bring their packages to the station for booking as early as possible,

(b) the number of Railway staff and labour should be adequate for completing all the work relating to loading within the time available,

(c) movement of perishables should be made by the fastest available trains etc.

All these Recommendations were accepted and advised to the Railways for implementation.

Instructions already exist, which are also reiterated, that all steps should be taken to ensure that:—

(a) perishables are not overloaded and over-carried, (b) action should be taken against loading of packages for stations in excess of their scheduled unloading capacity, (c) proper documentation of packages and their proper loading, (d) consignments not to be despatched to stations not falling on the route of the trains carrying them, (e) indiscriminate and haphazard loading of packages is not done by the booking stations and (f) failure of the staff of the destination station to unload the packages is taken up.

To guard against pilferage and theft, Railways have been advised that:

(i) Vulnerable points where consignments are victimised and thefts take place, should be localised and necessary security arrangements should be made either to escort the consignments over those areas or guard the places and bring the criminals to book.

(ii) Special watch should be kept at all vulnerable areas. Special efforts should be made by the Security Deptt. of the Railways and proper coordination should be made between contiguous Railways at the interchange points. In respect of docks, efforts should be made to improve

security of consignments moving from Railways to various sidings in the docks with the help and cooperation of the State Police and Security Department of the Railway. Repacking points and transhipment points should be specially watched and security arrangements improved.

(iii) Dogs squads should also be properly utilised for prevention of thefts of consignments.

In addition to the above, whenever there is a rush of perishables, Commercial Inspectors are deputed to all important stations to ensure expeditious and proper clearance of the consignments by way of observing all the instructions on the subject. Drives are also launched at important loading/transhipment points to contain irregularities on account of irregular packing, labelling and marking of packages, excess loading and interference en route of Parcel Vans, indiscriminate and haphazard loading of packages. During these drives, Officers/Inspectors/Supervisors are also instructed to educate the staff in proper observance of rules in these matters.

Action is also taken against the defaulting staff during these drives.

During 1983, four snch drives in respect of perishable consignments were launched by the Railways at the behest of Railway Ministry in addition to other special drives launched by the Railways on their own with a view to containing the incidence of theft, damage and pilferage.

It may be seen from the above that Railways are doing their maximum under available circumstances, to guard against theft, pilferage and damage to the perishable consignments and to contain incidence of compensation claims therefor to the maximum extent possible. It is, however, submitted that compensation claims against perishables arise due to the following factors which have nothing to do with theft, pilferage or bad handling during transit:—

(i) In some areas there are extreme temperatures and uncertain climatic conditions. Even at any given time, there are violent climatic variations. These conditions upset the precautions which Railways take during certain seasons to prevent damage or deterioration.

(ii) The packing industry is not yet fully developed in our country. The packing of goods both in respect of material

used and the methods employed is not of a high standard and contributes much to the damage.

(iii) Some loss or damage is inherent in the nature of commodity itself which gets aggravated in transit.

Nonetheless, Railways are alive to this problem and the situation on this account is periodically reviewed on the Railways in their Claim Prevention Meetings. The situation is constantly monitored by the Ministry of Railways as well as by way of calling statistical reports in this matter and corrective action is taken whenever found necessary.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 11, Para No. 4.24)

The Committee note that at the behest of Ministry of Agriculture, the Railways had manufactured 8 BG and 4 MG Refrigerated Vans basically for transporting fish and meat traffic, about two decades ago. There has been no further addition to this stock. Almost all the BG vans are stated to have outlived their normal life and are no more serviceable. The MG vans are, it is stated, not being used for want of traffic. The representative of the Ministry of Agriculture, however, pointed out to the Committee that this scheme of Refrigerated Vans was not given a fair trial and suggested that if an integrated plan of movement by Refrigerated Vans is drawn up this can prove to be viable proposition. According to him, cold storaged are also needed at both ends—loading and unloading. This Committee received memoranda from certain non-official who demanded that the use of Refrigerated Vans should not be dispensed with, rather these vans should be introduced for transportation of fruits, limes etc. over long distances. Although the Railways have made it appear that these vans are uneconomical the Committee wonder whether the national loss involved in the damage and deterioration in the ordinary transportation is reckoned while coming to this conclusion. The Committee are of the view that the matter should be settled in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the stock of Refrigerated Vans augmented simultaneously providing for cold storage facilities wherever necessary. The Committee would like to know the action taken in this regard. There obviously has been communication gap between the Ministries of Railways and Agriculture on this issue which should not persist any longer.

Reply of Government

Ministry of Agriculture is conducting a detailed study to decide the need for the manufacture of Refrigerated Vans, taking into account their previous experience in this regard, which was not very encouraging. The improvements which may be suggested in the vans based on the experiments being conducted by the Market Planning and Design Centre as finally agreed, are expected to improve intransit conditions of perishable commodities.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC'EC|VII|57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation S. No. 14 (Para No. 5.9)

The arrangements for storage and handling at the loading/unloading sites and transhipment points are at present admittedly not satisfactory. The lack of these facilities obviously causes considerable difficulties, delay and damage. The Committee are particularly concerned to note that there are not even proper shelters against sun and rain at the loading and unloading points. The Committee appreciate the frank admission of the representative of the Ministry of Railways that "it is a fact that the facilities given to the trade are not commensurate with the expectations of the trade" but expect concrete action to provide minimum facilities as could be provided with the accumulated 'Action Compensation, Passenger Safety and Amenities Fund' should be provided speedily. In this connection the Committee would invite reference to their observations contained in paragraph 1.13 of their 56th Report on 'Railway Safety'. As a long term measure, the Committee note that Ministry of Railways would be studying the requirements for evolving the perspective plan for the movement of perishable traffic. The Committee have also been assured that an exercise in this regard would be completed within six months. The committee would await the result of this exercise

Reply of Government

Instructions have been issued to the Zonal Railways to prepare a perspective plan for demand and movement of perishable commodities, in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture, State Government Agencies, trade and merchants. The Ministry of Agriculture has promised to write to State Governments to provide the necessary data and information for this purpose. The Railways have been asked to identify the minimum facilities required for handling perishables at stations and to provide these facilities in a phased

manner. Ministry of Agriculture has also been requested to furnish the requisite information to the Ministry of Railways in this regard.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 16, Para No. 6.13) .. ..

The Committee have received serious complaints about the manner of settling compensation claims by Railways and the time it takes. The claims arise because of the delays in transit and bad handling as well as lack of security on railways. The road transport on the other hand is reported to be far more safer and speedier and the claims relating thereto which are quite less, are settled almost on the spot. Earlier in this Report the Committee have dealt with the extent of theft, pilferage and damage in rail transport of perishable commodities for which compensation has been paid. It should be noted that possibilities of getting compensation in respect of goods booked at owner's risk are restricted and remote and that perishable commodities are almost wholly booked at owner's risk, Railway Risk rate being very high. The negligence or misconduct of the Railways or its staff will have to be proved to admit of claims. Thus, the figures of compensation claims paid would not indicate the actual magnitude of loss and damage to the goods. The plight of poor growers and petty traders who find their goods lost or damaged can well be imagined and the preference to road transport irrespective of the extra cost could also be well understood. Be that as it may, the committee see no reason why the safety of the movement and speedy settlement of claims compared to road transport cannot be ensured by the Railways. After all the Railways, though departmentally managed, are to be run on commercial lines. The Committee, would therefore, urge that on the basis of this Report proper facilities for movement of perishable commodities—storage, handling and in-transit should be provided and security tightened up to ensure speedy and safe movement; further, rules and procedures for settlement of claims simplified and streamlined to ensure prompt settlement. Greater emphasis should be laid on the delegation of powers in regard to the processing and settlement of claims.

Reply of Government

It has already been explained in detail in Ministry of Railways reply against Recommendation in Para No. 3.30 that Railways have been instructed to ensure that movement of perishables is made by the fastest available trains to minimise delays in transit and also steps are taken against rough handling i.e. avoiding overloading, proper documentation of packages, proper loading and unloading and

avoiding over-carriage of consignments etc., and also the steps taken towards security i.e. guarding of parcel sheds by R.P.F. staff, localising vulnerable points where consignments are victimised and making security arrangements therefor, keeping special watch at vulnerable points, keeping special watch at repacking and transhipments points etc.

Road transporter may settle claim for loss, damage etc. on the spot or more speedily than the railways as his clientale, field of operation and accountability are rather limited. Such a system, however, will not be feasible on the Railways where operation covers a much wider field and clientale and which being a Government Undertaking have to follow certain prescribed norms and procedures in all transactions having financial implications.

However, an elaborate machinery exists on the Zonal Railways for dealing with settlement of claims for compensation. Claims for perishables are generally of low value and are settled expeditiously. It is not correct that claims are rejected just because consignments are booked at Owner's Risk rate. Each case is carefully examined and claims are settled on merits. Powers for Claims settlement have also been delegated to selected Station Supdts. Station Masters and Commercial Inspectors.

All possible steps are taken by the Zonal Railways to ensure that there are no avoidable delays in disposal and settlement of claims. The average time taken in all compensation claims was 43 days during 1982-83 and this tempo is being maintained. However, in certain type of cases, particularly involving heavy amount, settlement is prolonged for unavoidable reasons.

Settlement in some cases is also held up on account of non-submission of documents such as original Railway Receipt, beejuck, letter of authority etc. by the claimants which are essential for the verification of claims. Delays also occur in cases where some criminal offence is suspected and the matter is investigated by police. However, it is the constant endeavour of the Railways to settle claims expeditiously having due regard to the Railways' liability under the provisions of the Indian Railways Act.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 17, Para No. 6.14)

The Committee further recommend that while rejecting a claim the Railway Claims Officers concerned should record his reasons for rejecting the claim and these reasons should be communicated to the claimant.

Reply of Government

The Claims Officers do record the reasons for rejecting claims and the same are also communicated to the claimants.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20.7.84]

Recommendation (S. No. 18, Para No. 6.15)

In this connection the Committee recall that in their 39th Report (1978-79) they had recommended the setting up of a Claims Tribunal for speedy and less expensive remedy to hear appeals against decisions of Railways Claims Officers, which was reported to the Committee to have been accepted by the Ministry of Railways. The Committee take a serious view of the fact brought to their notice by the Ministry themselves that even after lapse of 4 years "the modalities for setting up of Claims Tribunals were under consideration of a high level Committee". The Committee desire that the modalities should be finalised and the Claims Tribunals set up within the next six months and the fact should be reported to the Committee.

Reply of Government

The High Level Committee set up to examine the modalities for setting up Claims Tribunal did submit its report. However, while considering the report, Ministry of Railways observed that there were sharp differences of opinion on some vital issues within the High Level Committee. It was considered essential to go into the matter all over again. Therefore, another High Level Committee with Chief Comml. Supdt., South Eastern Railway as the Convener, Director, Finance (Budget), the Legal Adviser, Railway Board and the Chief Claims Officer, Eastern Railway as Members was set up to go into the matter in depth *de novo*. Due to changes in the constitution of the Committee from time to time, they could not finalise the report. However, the Committee has since tentatively formulated the proposals which are under consideration of the present members of the Committee for final report. The Committee has been requested to expedite their deliberation and submit their final report at the earliest. The report, after it is finalised, will have to be considered by the Ministry of Railways and will also require approval of the Ministries of Law, Finance and the Cabinet before the recommendations contained therein, are made effective. Considering the present stage of the report and the intervening stages before giving effect to those proposals, it may not be possible to complete the process of setting up of Claims Tribunals within the period

of 6 months. All steps are, however, being taken to set up the Tribunals at the earliest. As desired, as soon as the Claims Tribunals are set up, the matter shall be reported to the Estimates Committee. All steps are, however, being taken to set up the Claims Tribunal at the earliest. As desired, as soon as the Claims Tribunals are set up, this would be reported to the Estimates Committee.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20.7.84]

CHAPTER III

RECOMMENDATIONS WHICH THE COMMITTEE DO NOT DESIRE TO PURSUE IN VIEW OF GOVERNMENT REPLIES

Recommendation (S. No. 4, Para No. 2.24A)

The Committee appreciate that movement of perishable commodities at low tariff rates, even below operating costs, constitutes a heavy social burden. To reduce the social burden of the railways, the Committee suggest that a part of these social burdens should be borne by the general revenues of the Central Government. If such a course is adopted, the existing freight rates could be brought down to a reasonable level and their rise can be avoided in future.

Reply of Government

Based on the recommendations of Rail Tariff Enquiry Committee, the parcel rates have been rationalised. It has been the policy of the Government to charge for each variety of traffic what it can bear. The perishables—Vegetables, fruit, milk etc.—are charged below cost and these charges are kept intentionally low since these commodities are of daily use and greatly affect the life of common people. The High Level Committee on Social Burdens were of the opinion that, if the Ministry of Railways were permitted freedom in enhancing their freight rates and fares, the question of subsidy would normally not arise. While Railways can and do incur a loss in the transport of certain commodities like perishable, milk etc., they are in a position to make up this loss by carrying other commodities which has a cushion over the cost.

Although the movement of perishable commodities at low tariff rates, even below operating costs, constitutes a heavy social burden. there are certain compelling social considerations which are to be given due weight by the Central Government.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20.7.84]

Recommendation (S. No. 13, Para No. 4.26)

The Committee note that at the end of March, 1983, on an average 10.9 per cent of the parcel vans held by the Railways re-

mained out of track. In this connection, they were particularly distressed to learn that in the Eastern Railway on an average 44.2 per cent of wagons were out of track. This is highly unsatisfactory, especially viewed in the context of the demand for perishable commodities that are not being met properly and calls for concerted measures to normalise the position in this Railway. The Committee recommend that the Ministry of Railways should direct the Eastern Railway to undertake a crash programme in this behalf and see that it is implemented in the shortest possible time.

Reply of Government

The matter is under examination and a further communication will be sent shortly.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20-7-84]

Further Reply of Government

In the VP Group, there are several types such as VP, VPU, VKVP etc. In calculating the percentage ineffectives of VP, the total ineffectives of all types *viz.*, VP, VPU, VKVP etc., were being taken on the numerator whereas only the population of VP's was being taken in the denominator. The quotient so arrived at gave an erroneous and inflated ineffective percentage of VP's. This error in calculation has since been corrected. The ineffective percentage is now arrived at on th basis of the quotient 'ineffective VP's÷Total VP's' and on this basis it is ranging between 10 to 14 per cent which is not unsatisfactory.

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH REPLIES OF GOVERNMENT HAVE NOT BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COMMITTEE

Recommendation (S. No. 2, Para No. 1.14)

The Committee wish to emphasise that the deficiencies in regard to collection of statistic of production and demand regionwise and arrangements for transport of perishable commodities should be removed by making such institutional arrangements as may be needed and evolving a perspective plan for putting it through without delay.

Reply of Government

The Ministry of Agriculture who collect such statistics have stated that they are at present estimating the likely crop prospects for only 3 or 4 perishable commodities. They intend to take up such studies for more commodities by the middle of VII Five Year Plan period. Ministry of Agriculture has agreed to collect information on the marketable surplus in respect of major perishable commodities and the likely consumption areas to which they are to be dispersed.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 5, Para No. 2.25)

Though on paper highest priority is assigned for movement of perishable commodities, the Committee learn that irrespective of the demand the carriage by mail|Express trains is restricted "to the extent room is available." This obviously creates uncertainties and difficulties to the industry and trade as urged before the Committee by their representatives. While in the long run adequate facilities should be available for fast movement of perishable commodities at least over long distance, there should be some short term measures to remove uncertainities. There should be some earmarking of space in fast trains depending upon the demand which should be made known to the prospective consigners. Necessary instructions in this regard should be issued to the Zonal Railways.

Reply of Government .....

Instructions have been reiterated to the Railways that the allocation of available room in Mail|Express Trains for various stations| commodities should be made and publicised to the trade. Special arrangements made for the clearance of certain major commodities during the peak season will also be publicised to the trade and the concerned agencies.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 8, Para No. 3.29)

Adequate representation should invariably be given to the representatives of Grower and Traders dealing with perishable commodities on the Station|Divisional|Zonal Railway Users' Consultative Committees.

Reply of Government

The recommendation is noted.

Representation on the rail users' consultative Committees at all levels is given to different groups of rail users' including the State Governments and Agricultural Associations as well as State Legislatures and the Parliament. As wide representation as is possible is given to the travelling public, trade, industry and agricultural interests, interests of Growers and traders dealing with perishable commodities will also be ensured as necessary.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20-7-84]

Recommendation (S. No. 10, Para No. 4.23)

In reply to Estimates Committee's recommendation in para 2.105 of their 10th Report (1980-81) on the Ministry of Railways—Transportation of Essential Commodities, the Ministry had *inter alia* stated that Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) were engaged in studying the 'wagon climate' in transit of fruits and vegetables like apples, mangoes, oranges, bananas, potatoes and onions etc. The Indian Railways were also associated with this project and they extended cooperation for the experiments being conducted by the Marketing Planning & Design Centre (MPDC) under the Ministry of Rural Development. The Ministry further stated that the MPDC were expected to make their recommendations based on experiments with regard to changes in design of rolling stock and to improve intransit conditions. During evidence the committee sought to know

the latest position of the project as also the recommendations, if any, made by the MPDC. The representative of the Ministry informed the Committee that 'no specific recommendation was there'. The Committee desire that this project should be completed early and on the basis of the findings in regard to causes of in-transit deterioration, improved in-transit environment provided. The Committee would await further development in this regard.

Reply of Government

The Committee's observations have been noted. All feasible help is being rendered to the Market and Design Centre, to carry out their experiments for improvement of in-transit conditions of selected perishable commodities.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20.7.84]

Recommendation (S. No. 15, Para No. 5.9-A)

In this connection, the Committee commend the introduction of container system for transportation of perishable commodities transported in bulk in a phased manner so that pilferage, specially at loading, unloading and transhipment points is prevented and handling of goods is easier.

Reply of Government

It is pointed out that domestic containers are not suitable for the transportation of perishable commodities in bulk and no such plans have been considered by the Railways so far.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84]

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF WHICH FINAL REPLIES ARE AWAITED

Recommendation (S. No. 12, Para No. 4.25)

The Committee further recommend that the design of parcel vans should be improved in order *inter alia* to provide better carrying capacity.

Reply of Government

The matter is under examination and a further communication will be sent shortly.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC|EC|VII|57 dated 20.7.84]

Further reply of Government

The matter is still under consideration.

[Ministry of Railways' O.M. No. 83-BC-EC/VII/57 dated 20-7-84]

Comments of the Committee

Please see paragraph 1.21 of the Report Chapter I

NEW DELHI;
July 29, 1985
Sravana 7, 1907 *(S)*

CHINTAMANI PANIGRAHI
Chairman,
Estimates Committee.

APPENDIX

(*Vide* Introduction to the Report)

Analysis of action taken by Government on the 5th Report of Estimates Committee (Seventh Lok Sabha)

I.	Total No. of recommendations	18
II.	Recommendations/Observations that have been accepted by Government	
	Nos. 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18	
	Number	10
	Percentage to total	55·5%
III.	Recommendations/Observations which the Committee do not desire to pursue in view of Government's replies	
	No. 4·13	
	Number	2
	Percentage to total	11%
IV.	Recommendations /Observations in respect of which replies of Government have not been accepted	
	Nos. 2, 5, 8, 10, 15	
	Number	5
	Percentage to total	28%
V.	Recommendations/Observations in respect of which final replies of Government are still awaited	
	No. 12	
	Number	1
	Percentage to total	5·5%

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